

TO PROHIBIT EMPLOYMENT OF PRISON LABOR ON GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

JANUARY 27, 1897.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. GARDNER, from the Committee on Labor, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 8731.]

The Committee on Labor, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8731) to prohibit the employment of prison labor on Government buildings, having considered the same, report the bill back to the House with the recommendation that it do pass with the following amendment:

Add at the end of section 2 the following:

Provided, That this act shall not apply to contracts entered into prior to the passage of this act.

A full discussion of the provisions of the bill would involve very many of the principles of political economy. The arguments in favor of this legislation will be found in the contention that convict labor should not be brought in direct competition with the honest labor of the country. The principle is that involuntary labor or its products ought not compete in the markets of a free country with the product of free, voluntary, and responsible industry.

Legislation intended to prevent such competition has been enacted in many of the States. Some of it is of many years' standing, but nowhere is there any disposition shown to repeal or modify such legislation; on the contrary, representatives of States are urging upon Congress the enactment of legislation designed to wholly prevent such competition within their borders by debarring prison-made goods from transportation on interstate lines.

No specific instance of the employment of convict labor in the erection, extension, or repair of any building belonging to the Government has been brought to the attention of your committee.

The passage of this bill will, however, give Congressional sanction to the principle involved, and the guarantee of the law that convict labor shall not be hereafter employed on any building of the United States.

